

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S HIGHLIGHTS MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART FROM SOUTH ASIA

South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art
September 20, 2007

New York – *South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art*, now in its 7th year features prominently on the Christie's Asia Week calendar. On September 20, the spotlight will once again shine on the works of the Indian Subcontinent's greatest 20th and 21st century artists. From the Progressive Artists' Group to cutting edge contemporary works, the sale will not only focus on prime examples of many different movements and styles but will also make apparent the connecting lines and dots which link tradition with creation, the early 20th century revolutionary modern with the contemporary of tomorrow within the Subcontinent and the larger Indian communities, 60 years after achieving independence.



The Progressive Artist Group is well represented by iconic works of Tyeb Mehta, Francis Newton Souza and Syed Haider Raza. Tyeb Mehta's *Mahisasura*, 1996 (estimate: \$750,000-1,250,000) is part of a series of works Mehta conceived based on the 5th century epic, *Markandeya Purana*. Depicting the Goddess Durga and the Buffalo Demon, the painting is a discourse between the masculine and the feminine, between the divine and the mortal, between the bestial and the human.

La Terre, 1980 (estimate: \$350,000-500,000), is a prime example of Syed Haider Raza's ability to manipulate bold and saturated golds, reds and blacks in a masterful depiction of the earth. The fiery rendition of the planet ties the artist to his native homeland of India in its references to the forests

and landscapes of Madhya Pradesh. The painting comes from a European collector who befriended Raza years ago.

The sale also features a rare figurative work by Ram Kumar coming from a French collection. *Jeune Etudiant* (estimate: \$200,000-300,000) was painted in 1958, when Ram Kumar studied in France under the tutelage of Fernand Léger. The painting depicts a young forlorn figure against an urban and industrialized backdrop and serves as an evocation of Kumar's loneliness as a stranger in a foreign land.

Francis Newton Souza's highly personalized style comes to the forefront in *Nude with Fruit*, 1958 (estimate: \$300,000-400,000) from an American collection. Souza incorporates three archetypal styles of painting in this one work: the portrait, landscape and still life. The sale also features two stellar works by Souza formerly from the Robin Howard collection: *Untitled (Nude)*, 1959 (estimate: \$350,000-500,000); and *Untitled (Portrait of a Cleric)* (estimate: \$200,000-300,000) bearing Gallery One provenance.



Among the highlights of the next generation of artists, Bhupen Khakhar's *I, Me, My Village*, 1978 (estimate: \$200,000-250,000) is depicted on the front cover. The artist employs the devices of popular Indian religious imagery, early Italian painting, Byzantine icons and Indian Miniature



painting. He juxtaposes scenes of Indian village life with Hindu imagery identified in the painted portrait of Shiva, alongside more allegorical elements including a quaint townscape in the distance which seems drawn from fiction rather than reality. Khakhar, a friend and contemporary of Sir Howard Hodgkin, David Hockney and Salman Rushdie, was one of the few Indian artists who gained an international following before a domestic one and had a noted retrospective at the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid.

Atul Dodiya, regarded as one of India's most important contemporary artists, has become a widely recognized figurehead in South Asian art influencing many of the country's burgeoning younger artists. The sale will present *Three Painters*, 1996 (estimate: \$150,000-200,000), one of his most significant and biographical works in which Dodiya shows himself and his dear friend, Bhupen Khakhar standing ironically before a depiction of *La Réproduction Interdite (Not To Be Reproduced)*, 1937, by Belgian surrealist artist René Magritte.



From the collection of Mitchell and Laurie Schwarz is Avinash Chandra's *Untitled*, 1969 (estimate: \$150,000-200,000). This work embodies the saturated palette, ethos and ebullient energy of the West during the 1960s. It possesses a sexual virility and joie de vivre executed on a scale that makes this a masterpiece in the artist's oeuvre. Still a young artist, Chandra was the first painter to sell a work to the newly-opened Museum of Modern Art in New Delhi and in 1965 was the first Indian-British artist to be featured in a show in the Tate Gallery in London.

Female artists are also prominently featured in the sale. Arpita Singh's vision of a domestic Goddess titled *The Eternal Repose* (estimate: \$180,000-200,000) is a wonderful work by a highly sought after artist. Others in the sale include: N. Pushpamala's self-referential photographs as well as works by Nilima Sheikh and Nalini Malani, the latter was most recently in this year's Venice Biennale.

The sale also includes Anish Kapoor's *Untitled* (estimate: \$35,000-50,000). This watercolor executed in 2000 is a startlingly beautiful and ethereal work in which saturation creates undulating pools of color drawing the viewer magically into the piece. Rameshwar Broota's *A Chance Encounter*, 2007 (estimate: \$180,000-220,000), is also included and this work is a splendid example of the artist's working method whereby he creates texture by scraping away layers of monochromatic paint.

A significant group of artists from Pakistan is also presented in this sale. Zahoor ul Akhlaq, the progenitor of the neo – Miniaturist school is being offered for the first time (estimate: \$12,000-18,000). Also included in this group are: Rashid Rana, Aisha Khalid, Ambreen Butt, Amjad Ali Talpur, Ijaz ul Hassan, Naeem Rana and Nusra Latif Qureshi. Rashid Rana's monumental photo



montage, *A Day in the Life of Landscapes*, 2004 (estimate: \$50,000-70,000), is a prime work of one of Pakistan's most promising artists, who was recently featured in an exhibition on minimalism, *Grid <> Matrix*, alongside masters such as Piet Mondrian, Agnes Martin, Robert Rauschenberg and Andreas Gursky. This highly conceptual work is a play on East and West, on the real and the ideal, an ode to Punjab, as well as a visual essay on perception.

The sale offers a superb selection of contemporary art, including photography, print, mixed media and oil on canvas. N.S. Harsha's *Untitled*, 1997 (estimate: \$60,000-80,000), shows the artist's preoccupation with feet – he sees the foot as a representation of the human condition, while also acknowledging its place as the representation of the transitory presence and unknowable and inexpressible divine in Hindu and Buddhist texts.



Jitish Kallat's *Covering Letter* (estimate: \$40,000-60,000); Justin Ponmany's *Elixir* (estimate: \$30,000-40,000); Aisha Khalid's *Behind the Curtain* (estimate: \$8,000-12,000); Shibu Natesan's *Montage I* (estimate: \$60,000-80,000); T.V. Santhosh's *Across An Unresolved Story* (estimate: \$30,000-40,000) and Chitra Ganesh's *Secrets* (estimate: \$7,000-9,000) will also feature in the sale.

Auction: South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art

September 20 at 10 a.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

September 14 – 19

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